

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-8 (Canceled)

Claim 9 (Original): A method for stretching a continuously supplied optical polymer film by imparting tension thereto while holding both edges thereof by holding means, which comprises

- (i) stretching the film at least in a width direction thereof at a stretch ratio of 1.1 to 20.0,
- (ii) adjusting the difference in longitudinal advancing speed between the holding means on both edges of the film to 1% or less,
- (iii) bending the advancing direction of the film in the state that both edges thereof are held so that the advancing direction of the film at an outlet of the step of holding both edges of the film is inclined at an angle of 20 to 70° to a substantial stretching direction of the film, and
- (iv) maintaining the supporting property of the polymer film, stretching the film in the presence of a state in which the volatile content is 5% or more, and then, decreasing the volatile content while shrinking the film.

Claim 10 (Canceled)

Claim 11 (Original): The stretching method according to claim 9, wherein the polymer is polyvinyl alcohol, a cellulose acylate, a polycarbonate or a polysulfone.

Claim 12 (Canceled)

Claim 13 (Original): The stretching method according to claim 9, wherein the polymer is a vinyl alcohol-based polymer.

Claim 14 (Canceled)

Claim 15 (Original): A method for producing a polarizing film comprising stretching a vinyl alcohol-based polymer by the method according to claim 9, and allowing a polarizing element to be adsorbed before or after stretching.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): A polarizing film produced by ~~the method according to claim 14, a method comprising stretching a vinyl alcohol-based polymer by a method for stretching an optical polymer film, and allowing a polarizing element to be adsorbed before or after stretching,~~

wherein the method for stretching an optical polymer film by holding both edges of the continuously supplied polymer film by holding means, and imparting tension thereto while advancing said holding means in a longitudinal direction of the film, comprises allowing a locus L1 of the holding means from a substantial holding initiation point to a substantial holding release point on one edge of the polymer film, a locus L2 of the holding means from a substantial holding initiation point to a substantial holding release point on the other edge of the polymer film, and a distance W between the two substantial holding release

points to satisfy the following equation (1), maintaining the supporting property of the polymer film, stretching the film in the presence of a state in which the volatile content is 5% or more, and then, decreasing the volatile content while shrinking the film:

$$|L2 - L1| > 0.4W \quad (1),$$

wherein the longitudinal direction of the film is inclined at an angle of 20 to 70° to a transmission axis direction.

Claim 17 (Original): The polarizing film of claim 16, wherein the longitudinal direction of the film is inclined at an angle of 40 to 50° to the transmission axis direction.

Claim 18 (Original): A polarizer in which at least one side of the polarizing film of claim 16 is protected with a transparent film.

Claim 19 (Original): The polarizer of claim 18, wherein the retardation of the protective film on at least one side at 632.8 nm is 10 nm or less.

Claim 20 (Original): A liquid crystal display device in which the polarizer of claim 19 is used as at least one of two polarizers disposed on both sides of a liquid crystal cell.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): A birefringential film produced by stretching according to the method according to claim 1, a method for stretching an optical polymer film by holding both edges of the continuously supplied polymer film by holding means, and

imparting tension thereto while advancing said holding means in a longitudinal direction of the film, which comprises allowing a locus L1 of the holding means from a substantial holding initiation point to a substantial holding release point on one edge of the polymer film, a locus L2 of the holding means from a substantial holding initiation point to a substantial holding release point on the other edge of the polymer film, and a distance W between the two substantial holding release points to satisfy the following equation (1), maintaining the supporting property of the polymer film, stretching the film in the presence of a state in which the volatile content is 5% or more, and then, decreasing the volatile content while shrinking the film:

$$\underline{|L2 - L1| > 0.4W} \quad (1).$$

in which a longitudinal direction of the film and an orientation direction thereof are inclined at 20 to 70° to a parallel.

Claim 22 (Original): A birefringential film produced by stretching according to the method according to claim 9, in which a longitudinal direction of the film and an orientation direction thereof are inclined at 20 to 70° to a parallel.